SMILE

Issue 8

30p Free to Shoplifters

SMILE BACK AT THE RULING CLASS

ABOLISH TRUTH

SMILE/84b WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET/LONDON E1

OPEN LETTER TO THE NEOIST NETWORK AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE'

As soon as I got back from the Neoist Festival in Ponte Nossa, Italy, I ceased to be a neoist and moved to Stoke Newington in North London. As an ironic gesture I named my new house Akademgorod. I felt it fitting that upon ceasing to be a neoist I should realise the six finger plan, the establishment of Akademgorod. As Akademgorod is a promised land I'm keeping its whereabouts a poorly guarded secret and using a box number for my mail.

My approach to art, life and politics has not changed, I simply feel it's no longer feasable for me to be a 'neoist'. Splits and schisms are essential to my conception of neoism and any public slanging match between an ex-neoist and the remaining members of the movement is worth twelve dozen great works of art. Ultimately what all neoists should aim for is an acrimonious split with the movement. To leave neoism is to realise it.

POETRY AND REVOLUTION

The problem with the revival in British poetry, the so called 'radical poetry', is that it fails to be radical with language. 'Radical' ideas are expressed using the language of the bosses, a language which is inherently reactionary.

To treat the language of the establishment as a neutral vehicle for the expression of 'revolutionary ideology' requires either cynicism or incredible naivete. In using such language to voice a popularist message the 'radical poets' become lackies of the bosses. They have created a spectacle of revolution which is counter-revolutionary precisely because it carries an appearance of radicality which absorbs and diverts class warfare away from areas of genuine revolutionary struggle.

Language is never neutral, it is loaded and arbitrary. Under capital language is the most subtle means of oppression. The only valid poetic acts under such conditions are acts of vandalism. Only when capital has been abolished will poetry express anything worthwhile. Until then the function of radical poetry must be to attack linguistic structures which is why only sound and concrete poetry are of interest to the revolutionary. Failure to be radical with language produces bourgeois poetry. Ultimately class violence is the only metaphor of radical poetry and it is this violence that will sweep away both the bosses and the psuedo-radicalism of leftist groups like 'Angels Of Fire' and the SWP.

DISCOURSE ON THE SUPRESSION OF REALITY

Today there is nothing left to hope for but the safe arrival of the next welfare cheque. Radical art and politics are dead.

Rather than being the birth of a new era of struggle the activities of the Dutch Provos, the Situationists, King Mob and the Angry Brigade, were, in reality, the swan song of the avant-garde tradition.

Slowly we are reclaiming the European heritage (Lettrism/Nuclear Art) that precipitated the end of the avant-garde and which was, until recently, obliterated from our conciousness by its inferior American contemporaries such as Abstract Expressionism and the Beat Generation. However all this increase in our historic conciousness has achieved is the underlining of the idea that our belief in change is simply one of a number of things that never changes.

Today there is not a single original gesture left to be made. Everything has been done and all that is possible is the addition of a little irony to what already exists by the repetition of single gestures isolated from this tradition and performed in full conciousness of their futility. Nothing can be taken seriously and this is especially true of statements that imply it is no longer possible to be serious.

When the avant-garde became concious of fragmentation it became more subject to it. With each supposed progression the avant-garde multiplied its fragmentation, an event which was marked at each point by a decline in the quality of its thought. Today, the truely avant-gardist work achieves a banality unthinkable at the turn of the century.

Fragmentation within the avant-garde eventually resulted in the seperation of its art from its politics without either ever achieving a genuine autonomy. Each fragment believed it had reached totality without even achieving the level of a discourse. On the one hand there was Fluxus and on the other the Situationists. Both are marked by a reactionary attitude towards women which expresses itself in the form of a supposedly liberated attitude towards sexuality which is, when examined closely, both repressive and moralistic.

Today we are no longer stupid enough to imagine that what we do is new, or even that such an assertion does not imply a progression and hence a certain 'newness'. We will continue to repeat the same old gestures with increasing unoriginality.

ARTISTS STRIKE

Artists engaged in political struggle act in two key areas: the use of their art for direct social change; and actions to change the structures of the art world. It needs to be understood that this activity is necessarily of a reformist, rather than revolutionary, character. Indeed this political activity often serves to consolidate the existing order, in the West, as well as in the East.

The use of art for social change is bedevilled by the close integration of art and society. The state supports art, it needs art as a cosmetic cloak to its horrifying reality, and uses art to confuse, divert and entertain large numbers of people. Even when deployed against the interests of the state, art cannot cut loose from the umbilical cord of the state. Art in the service of revolution is unsatisfactory and mistrusted because of the numerous links of art with the state and capitalism. Despite these problems, artists will go on using art to change society.

Throughout the century, artists have attacked the prevailing methods of production, distribution and consumption of art. These attacks on the organisation of the art world have gained momentum in recent years. This struggle, aimed at the destruction of existing commercial and public marketing and patronage systems, can be brought to a successful conclusion in the course of the next decade.

The refusal to labour is the chief weapon of workers fighting the system; artists can use the same weapon. To bring down the art system it is necessary to call for years without art, a period of three years — 1990 to 1993 — when artists will not produce work, sell work, permit work to go on exhibition, and refuse collaboration with any part of the publicity machinery of the art world. This total withdrawal of labour is the most extreme collective challenge that artists can make to the state.

The years without art will see the collapse of many private galleries. Museums and cultural institutions handling contemporary art will be severely hit, suffer loss of funds, and will have to reduce their staff. National and local government institutions for the financing and administration of contemporary art will be in serious trouble. Art magazines will fold. The international ramifications of the dealer/museum/publicity complex make for vulnerability; it is a system that is keyed to a continuous juggling of artists, finance, works and information — damage one part, and the effect is felt world-wide.

Three years is the minimum period required to cripple the system, whilst a longer period of time would create difficulties for artists. The very small number of artists who live from the practice of art are sufficiently wealthy to live on their capital for three years. The vast majority of people who produce art have to subsidize this work by other means: they will, in fact, be saving money and time. Most people who practice art never sell their work at a profit, do not get the chance to exhibit their work under proper conditions, and are unmentioned by the publicity organs. Some artists may find it difficult to restrain themselves from producing art. These artists will be invited to enter camps, where the making of art works is forbidden, and where any work produced is destroyed at regular intervals.

In place of art, people can spend time on the numerous historical, aesthetic and social issues facing art. It will be necessary to construct more equitable forms for marketing, exhibiting and publicising art in the future. As the twentieth century has progressed, capitalism has smothered art — the deep surgery of the years without art will give art a new chance. In the meantime it is necessary to put all our time and effort into publicizing and organizing the artists strike. This work must be carried out now, several years before the strike takes place, to ensure that at the time we are striking the novelty value of what we are doing has worn off and that it is not consumed as an artistic event.

PRAXIS MANIFESTO

Previous avant-garde movements have sought the realisation of aims and principles set out in an endless series of manifestos. In PRAXIS we arrive at practice.

PRAXIS abolishes the divide between theory and practice by defining itself in terms of the tautology 'I am what I am'. That is to say that whatever we are or do is PRAXIS.

Where previous avant-garde movements sought to define themselves through the exclusion of ideas, PRAXIS finds coherence in the totality of human endeavour and particularly in the endeavour to seek definition through exclusion.

PRAXIS superceeds Neoism precisely because it does not seek new artistic methods or aesthetic criteria. In PRAXIS we practice plagiarism as an artistic technique and investigate the use of the multiple name aesthetic. Individuality is to be questioned by everyone adopting the name Karen Eliot and issuing a magazine called SMILE.

NOTHING TAKES OUT OF WORK

SMILE/84b WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET/LONDON E1

TOWARDS THE SELF REFERENTIAL IN ART

The movement of banalisation under the shimmering diversion of the spectacle, dominates modern society the world over and at every point where the developed consumption of commodities has multiplied the roles and objects to choose from in appearance. The relics of religion and of the family (which remain the principal form of the heritage of class power) and the moral repression which they assume, can be combined into one with the repeated affirmation of the joy of this world - this world only being produced precisely by psuedo-joy which contains repression within it. The smug acceptance of that which exists can also be combined into one, with purely spectacular rebellion, this translates the simple fact that dissatisfaction itself became a commodity as soon as econcomic abundance was able to extend its production to the treatment of such a raw material.

By concentrating within themself the image of a possible role, the celebrity, the spectacular representation of a living human being, concentrates this banality. The condition of the star is the specialisation of the seemingly lived, the object of identification with apparent life without depth, which must compensate for the fragments of productive specialisation which are really lived. Celebrities exist in order to represent varied types of life styles and styles of comprehending society, free to express themselves globally. They incarnate the inaccessible result of social labour by mining the sub-products of this labour which are magically trnasferred above it as its goal: power and vactions, decisions and consumption, which are at the beginning and at the end of an undiscussed process. There, it's the governmental power which personalizes itself in a psuedo-celebrity, here it's the star of consumption which popularizes itself as psuedo-power over the experienced. But just as the activities of the star are not really global, they are not really varied.

The agent of the spectacle, put on stage as a star, is the opposite of the individual; he is the enemy of the individual in himself as obviously as in others. Passing into the spectacle as a model for indentification, the agent has renounced all autonomous qualities in order to identify himself with the general law of obedience to the course of things. The star of consumption, while being externally the representation of different types of personality, shows each of these types having equal access to the totality of consumption and finding similar happiness there. The celebrity of decision must possess a complete stock of recognized human qualities. Thus between stars official differences are wiped out by official similarity, the presupposition of their excellence in everything. Khruschev became a general so as to decide on the battle of Kursk, not on the spot, but at the twentieth anniversary, when he was master of the State. Kennedy remained an orator even to the point of proclaiming the eulogy over his own tomb, since Theodore Sorensen continued to edit speeches for the successor in the style which had characterized the personality of the deceased. The admirable people in which the system personifies itself are well known for not being what they are, they became great men by descending beneath the reality of the smallest individual life, and everyone knows it.

Radical theory has come full circle when its critique of daily life is drawn on to provide the sophisticated vocabulary of a justification of the status quo. Individuals expressing dissatisfaction with the self-satisfied psuedo-enjoyments in the Situationist millieu, for example, have been characterized as lacking a 'capacity for enjoyment', a 'sense of play', or even 'radical subjectivity'. and accused of 'volunterism' or 'militantism' for having concretely proposed radical projects or more experimental activities.

Situationism is an extreme form of modern anti-puritanism that has to pretend to enjoy what is supposed to be enjoyable. Like the city dweller who affirms his preference for living in the country although for some reason he never goes there or if he does soon gets bored and returns to the city, the situationist has to feign pleasure because his activity is by definition 'passionate', even when that activity is tedious or nonexistent. In letting everyone know that he refuses sacrifice and demands everything, he differs from the man in the ads who insists on the best only in the degree of his pretension and in the often scarcely more than token ideological avowal of the obstacles that remain in the way of his total realisation. Dissatisfaction and boredom are forgotten in their boring, ritual, denunciation, and at a time when even the most retrograde ideologies are becoming frankly pessimistic and self-critical in their decomposition, the situationist presents an effective image of present satisfaction.

Situationist ideological egotism holds up as the radical essence of humanity that most alienated condition of humanity for which the bourgeoisie was reproached, which left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, differing only accidently from the bourgeois version in envisaging a different means of realisation for this collection of isolated egos. This position is contradicted by the actual historical experience of revolutions and often even by the very actions of those who invoke it.

The radicals criticality and often appropriate calculated 'arrogance' and use of insults – once taken out of the context of active struggle to change things – finds a natural place in a world where everyone is presented with a spectacle of inferiority and encouraged to think that he is 'different'; where every tourist seeks to avoid 'the tourists' and every consumer prides himself on not believing the ads (an illusion of superiority that is often intentionally programmed into ads in order to facilitate the simultaneous penetration of the essential subliminal message). The psuedo-critical individual affirms his static superiority through his contemptuous and consequentless critiques of others who have cruder or at least different illusions. Radical humour – product of the contradictions between latent possibilities of the epoch and its absurd reality – once it ceases to be practical, approaches simply the median of popular humour of a society where the good spectator has been largely replaced by the cynical spectator.

As reinvestors of the cultural riches of the past, radicals, once the use of those riches is lost, rejoin spectacular society as simple promoters of culture. The process of modern revolution – communication containing its own critique, continuous domination of the present over the past – meshes with that of a society depending on the continuous turnover of commodities, where each new lie criticizes the previous ones. That a work has something to do with the critique of the spectacle – in manifesting an element of 'authentic radicality' or in representing some theoretically articulated moment of the decomposition of the spectacle – is hardly disadvantageous for it from the standpoint of the spectacle. While radicals are right in pointing out the detournable elements in their forebears, in doing so they simultaneously win for those forebears a place in the spectacle, which, because it is so sorely lacking in the qualitative, welcomes the affirmation that there is some to be found among the cultural goods it markets. The detourned fragment is rediscovered as fragment; when the use goes the consumption remains; the detourners are detourned.

A by-product of the circulation of commodities, tourism, human circulation considered as consumption, is basically reduced to the leisure of going to see what has become banal. The ecconomic organisation of the frequentation of different places is already in itself the guarantee of their equivalence. The same modernization which has removed time from travel has also removed it from the reality of space.

The struggle between tradition and innovation, which is the principle of the internal development of culture in historical societies, can only be carried on through the permanent victory of innovation. Yet innovation in culture is carried by nothing other than the total historical movement which by becoming concious of its totality, tends to go beyond its own cultural presuppositions and moves towards the suppression of all seperation.

Situationism and Fluxus are the two currents which could mark the end of modern art. Though only in a relatively concious manner, they are contemporaries of the last great assault of the revolutionary movement, which left them imprisoned in the same artistic field whose decay they announced, and is the basic reason for their immobilization. Fluxus and Situationism are historically related and opposed. This opposition, which constitutes the most important and radical contribution of each, reveals the internal inadaquacy of their critique, developed one-sidely by each. Situationism wanted to suppress art without realizing it, Fluxus wanted to realize art without suppressing it. The critical passion later elaborated by PRAXIS has shown that the suppression and the realization of art are inseperable aspects of the same overcoming of art.

Culture turned completely into commodity must also turn into the star commodity of the spectacular society, the commodity that helps sell all other commodities. In the second half of the twentieth-century culture holds the key role in the development of the economy, a role played by the automobile in the first half, and by the railroads in the second half of the previous century.

Ideas improve. The meaning of words participates in the improvement. Plagiarism is necessary. Progress implies it. It squeezes the phrase of an author, makes use of its expressions, rubs out a false idea, replaces it with a true idea.

Karen Eliot is the name choosen/invented by Karen Eliot to refer to an international star who can be anyone. The name is fixed the people using it aren't. Between 1990 and 1993 there must be an effective strike by artists, no work should be produced and none should be lent to be exhibited. This is the first step on the road towards a totally self-referential art.

BASIC BANALITIES

In the West time has always been linear. However it was not until the bourgeois revolutions of the eighteenth century

that a dynamic notion of progress was effectively coupled to this. Once the bourgeoisie installed itself in power the implications of this coupling invaded every area of life. In the arts this manifested itself in a fetishising of 'originality' in the form of stylistic innovation. The upshot of this is that eighteenth century rationalism became nineteenth century romanticism which in turn became twentieth century modernism. It should be emphasised that these 'innovations' were always in terms of style and never in terms of content. That is to say they were essentially hollow and that beneath surface appearance there were no changes at all.

Having looked at the 'broad categories we will turn our attention to the sub-divisions which art historians make a living from elaborating. The first modernist sub-division of any interest is futurism which is essentially a fusion of cubism, expressionism and the ideas of Alfred Jarry. Its emphasis on shock, originality and innovation mark it as a typical product of bourgeois society. It was only natural that it should develop from such criteria a love of speed, machines and war.

Due to the bourgeois demand for continual pseudo-change futurism was soon overtaken by dada as an artistic force. Dada was basically futurism under a new name but where futurism balanced its negative aspects with a belief in technological progress dada embraced an entirely nihilistic perspective. Dadaistic negation reached its peak with Club Dada in Berlin after which its very negation was negated by the Parisian dadaists who went on to rename it surrealism.

The surrealists achieved this negation of negation by rationalising the irrational with badly digested fragments of Marxist-Leninism and Freudian psycho-analysis. Where dada had destroyed the language of alienation elaborated by de Sade, Lautreamont and Rimbaud, surrealism held up these pornographers of the human soul as liberaters of repressed desire.

As surrealism faded into academicism it was replaced by other newer groups. The first of these, the Lettrist Movement, was formed in 1946 by Isidore Isou, a Rumanian living in Paris. The Lettrists identified creativity as the essential human urge and then defined this solely in terms of originality. Their interests were initially literary and resemble inferior works of concrete poetry. Isou believed he had superceded all aesthetic structures and resystematised the sciences of language and sign into a single discipline which he named 'hypergraphology'.

The left-wing of the Lettrists, led by Guy Debord, wrecked a Charlie Chaplin press conference at the Paris Ritz in the summer of 1952. Isou denounced them to the newspapers which resulted in the left-wing splitting from the main body of the movement, renaming itself the Lettrist International and issuing its own magazine, 'Potlach'.

The main activities of the Lettrist International were 'drifting' and 'psychogeography'. The former consisted of wandering around a city following the solicitation of the architecture one encountered. It was an attempt to find types of architecture one desired unconciously. The latter was the study and correlation of the material obtained from drifting and was used to work out new emotional maps of existing areas or to draw up plans for new Utopian cities.

While the Lettrist Movement's interests were primarily literary and aesthetic and those of the Lettrist International were mainly architectural there existed other groups whose interests revolved around painting. One such group was COBRA, formed in 1948 out of the Dutch Experimental Group, the Danish Spiralen group and the Belgian Bureau International de Surrealisme Revolutionaire. The group whose work was a European reaction to Abstract Expressionism lasted three years and was partially reconstituted when Asger Jorn, a former member, founded the International Movement For An Imaginist Bauhaus in 1953. Jorn was assisted in his formation of the Imaginist Bauhaus, which was set up in opposition to the new Bauhaus of Max Bill, by Enrico Baj who was at the time the leading light of the Nuclear Art Movement.

Nuclear Art had been founded in 1951 by Baj and Sergio Damgelo. The membership was drawn from a number of mainly Italian avant garde groups including MAC, T and Group 58 and also included as members or close collaborators former futurists, dadaists and surrealists (for example Raoul Hausmann). Between 1953 and 56 there doesn't appear any clear distinction between the membership of the Imaginist Bauhaus and Nuclear Art. And membership seems to be the only thing that differentiated Nuclear Art from the Spatialists, a Milanese group who like COBRA and the Nuclear Artists were experimenting with a European style of abstract painting.

In September 1956 a conference was held in Alba, Italy, to bring together members of the European avant-garde. In reality this meant members of the Lettrist International, Nuclear Art, the International Movement For An Imaginist Bauhaus and the London Psychogeographical Association. Before the conference began there was a split with the Belgian representative Christian Dotremont, a former surrealist and ex-member of COBRA. Enrico Baj was excluded on the first day and the conference then confirmed its break with the Nuclearists. The conference created an accord which formed the basis for the disillusion of the Lettrist International, the Imaginist Bauhaus and the Psychogeographical Association the following year and their replacement with a single organisation, the Situationist International. However, Jacques Calonne, one of the eight remaining members of the conference after the exclusion of Baj, chose to sign the Nuclear Art 'Against Style' manifesto rather than join the Situationists. Indeed only three of the conference delegates, Asger Jorn, Piero Simondo and Elena Verrone, ever joined the Situationist International and the latter two were excluded in January 1958 while Jorn resigned in April 1961.

Nuclear Art, like Isou's Lettrist Movement, continued to develop its own theses and ignored the formation of the Situationist International (SI). Indeed 1957, the year of the SI's foundation, was also to prove one of the Nuclearists most fruitful years. It was during this year that the 'Against Style' manifesto was issued. Its signatories included Piero Manzoni, Yves Klien (who would later become involved in Nouveaux Realisme) and at least one member of the College de Pataphysique. The manifesto itself stated that 'every invention becomes convention: it is imitated for purely commercial reasons, which is why we must begin a vigorous anti-stylistic action in the cause of an eternally 'other' art.' It concluded 'Impressionism helped painting to get rid of conventional subject matter; cubism and futurism later got rid of the need for realistic reproduction of objects; and abstraction finally removed the last traces of representational illusion. A new - and final - link today completes this chain: we Nuclear painters, denounce, in order to destroy, the final convention, STYLE.'

The situationists went through two distinct phases. Until 1961 they were essentially an art movement although during this period they became increasingly politicised. However there was never a clearly marked change from what had been undertaken by the Lettrist International, that is to say the production of nihilistic and iconoclastic anti-art, and what was undertaken by the Situationists as their project developed. During the second phase of its existence the Situationist International was in essence a political grouping on the more extreme fringe of the ultra-left. The Situationists derived their political theory principally from Paul Cardan and Socialisme ou Barbarie. The central concept of the Situationists political critique is that of the Spectacle. The idea being that under Capital the consumer is reduced to the level of a spectator who observes life rather than participates in it. It should be emphasised that the Situationists interpreted capitalism in terms of alienated consumption. However consumption is merely one aspect of an alienated society and must first be generated by alienated production. The Situationists saw world wide proletarian revolution with unlicensed pleasure as its only goal as the means to supercede capitalist production and abolish alienation. The form of social organisation to be adopted during and after this revolution was that of workers councils. Needless to say the Situationists political theory contained many traces of their bohemian background and more than a few reactionary ideas.

Situationism reached its peak during the Paris Uprisings of May 68 after which it went into a rapid degeneration. The SI floundered until its ultimate disintergration in 1971. In 1974 Christopher Gray, a former member of the SI, was assisted in bring out a book of English translations of Situationist texts by Malcolm McClaren's Suburban Press. McClaren then used the book, 'Leaving the 20th Century', as a blue print for the creation of punk rock, utilising such information as the fact that the Lettrists had painted slogans across their clothes. It was also via Situationism that a large amount of libertine ideology was assimilated into the ultra-left, anarchism and the counter-culture.

THE LEFT HAND PATH marginal culture from de sade to the present

Introduction: To Have As Goal Practical Truth.

'I have never claimed to have anything new to say: I am not trying to launch novelties on the cultural market. One tiny adjustment in what is essential has much greater import than a hundred incidential improvements. The only truely new thing here is the direction of the stream carrying commonplaces along.'
Raoul Vaneigem 'Revolution Of Everyday Life.'

This text is based on the premise that there is a lineage running through twentieth-century art that is encompassed by the tradition of Futurism, Dada, Lettrism, Situationism, Nouveaux Realisme, Fluxus, Mail Art, Punk Rock, Neoism and PRAXIS.

There is generally recognised to be a lineage stretching from futurism to Paris dada (surrealism) but in England most academic historians seem to think that it ended with the Second World War, or else that Paris dada lingered on until the death of Pope Andre Breton in 1966 but that no new movement ever superceeded it. When academics are aware of movements such as Fluxus and Situationism they tend to dismiss them as dada revivals. As I will show these movements grew out of the lineage of futurism and dada, and while they may not be a progression from dada, they are certainly not a revival of it. For there to be a dada revival there would have to be a point at which dada activity ceased but rather than this being the case we find there is a single lineage. Individual dadaists went from Zurich dada to Berlin and Paris dada, and along the way Berlin and Paris picked up new dadaists. Paris dada spread around the world under the name 'surrealism'. People swept along by Paris dada later involved themselves in groups such as COBRA, which then via the International Movement For An Imaginist Bauhaus eventually fed members into the Situationist International. People moved from one group to another, the names of the groups changed but there is a definate lineage coming down to the present through memberships inherited from previous movements. To talk of a dada revival is ridiculous when dada activities never ceased. It is not even possible to talk of a dada resurgence, the number of artists undertaking dada type activities has been increasing steadily from the early part of this century. While some artists still call themselves dadaists others have newer names for what they do. An artist who uses the term dada to describe what they do today goes completely against the spirit of dada. After all if the dadaists had been honest about what they were doing in 1916 they'd have called themselves expressionists, cubists, or futurists. The sons of dada are alive and well but to actually talk about being a dadaist today is to miss the point entirely.

I will deal with the 'dada' lineage not in terms of its 'aesthetic/artistic' productions (ie painting/sculpture/performance) but rather in terms of style and attitude and the closely linked concepts of 'individuality' and 'originality'.

In tracing this lineage I start from a theoretical position in which I believe that there is no historical 'uniqueness' to the section of the avant-garde that forms the most refered to section of the dada lineage (futurism, Zurich, Berlin, Paris dada). This is an essentialist stance taken in opposition to the anti-essentialism of the structuralist and deconstructionist criticism which has made a major impact on recent debate about the dada lineage. My own belief is that the emphasis on originality (novelty) and individuality (the strange) which certain critics have singled out as being the characteristic features of the avant-garde, can not only be found in Romanticism but can be traced back to the dawn of human history.

To fully understand the concepts of originality and individuality in relationship to the avant-garde we must add a third concept, that of 'authenticity'. The fetishising of the relationship between theory and practice which finds such an important place within the avant-garde stems directly from its desire for authenticity. When theory and practice fail to match the authenticity of both is brought into question. If someone or something is inauthentic (unreal), they lack, by implication, individuality (definition).

DE SADE (1740–1814)

'I would like at this juncture to pay homage to de Sade. His appearance at a great turning point in history and his astonishing lucidity together qualify him as the last great aristocratic rebel. Thus in the '120 Days of Sodum', he gives us the masters of the Chateau Of Selling making their bid for absolute mastery and earthly paradise by massacring all their servants. Marquies and snasculotte, de Sade couples in his person the icily logical hedonism of the evil grand seigneur and the revolutionary will to push the employment of subjectivity, freed at last from the shackles of hierarchy, as far as it will go. His desperate efforts to abolish alienation, both positive and negative, place him in the highest rank among theoriticians of the whole man. It is high time he was read as carefully by revolutionaries as Marx.

Sade describes two possible attitudes. On the one hand the libertines of the '120 Days Of Sodum' who can only really enjoy themselves by torturing to death the object they have seduced (and what more fitting hommage to a thing than to make it suffer?). On the other hand the libertines of 'Philosophy In The Boudoir', warm and playful, who do all they can to increase one anothers pleasure. The former are the masters of old, vibrant with hatred and revolt, the latter are masters without slaves, discovering in one another only the reflection of their own pleasure.'
Raoul Vaneigem 'Revolution Of Everyday Life.'

'If it then becomes incontestable that we have recieved from Nature the right indiscriminately to express our wishes to all women, it likewise becomes incontestable that we have the right to compell their submission, not exclusively, for I should be contradicting myself, but temporarily (the doctrine of 'nonpossessiveness'). It cannot be denied that we have the right to degree laws that compell women to yield to the flames of him who would have her, violence itself being one of that right's effects, we can employ it lawfully.'
de Sade 'Philosophy In The Boudoir.'

The lineage that stretches back from neoism through fluxus, situationism, dada, futurism, Jarry, Huysmans, Rimbaud, and Lautreamont, usually cites de Sade as one of its most illustrious precursors. Sade is usually viewed by those who place themselves within this tradition as an advocate of total liberty who recognized the interconnections between the pleasureable and the forbidden. He is admired for his refusal to obey any exterior injunctions (to the extent of raping and poisoning others for his own 'sexual pleasure') and for having maintained sovereignty over his destiny no matter what the cost (usually a not particularly large hush hush payment in an attempt to buy his way out of a possible legal action). It was for these reasons that Pope Andre Breton eulogized him as a 'Surrealist in Sadism' in the First Surrealist Manifesto of 1924 and Raoul Vaneigem continually cites him with approval throughout his 'classic of subversion' 'The Revolution Of Everyday Life' (1967). The list of those who cite Sade with enthusiastic approval range from the child murderer Ian Brady to the 'philosopher' Roland Barthes.

I do not wish to get involved in the debate about exactly what Sade did or did not intend to do in a particular instance, for example with the five prostitutes he poisoned in Marseilles. Whether or not Sade intended to kill the prostitutes it is clear that he was prepared to make others suffer for his own pleasure. There is no doubt that he deserves the epithet sadist.

The question I wish to raise in relation to Sade is why he was such an attractive figure to the Parisian dadas, the lettrists and the situationists. The answer is, I believe, quite simple. Their image of Sade is of a man who dared to overstep the stiffling constraints of his society. To them he appears to have liberated himself from the restraints of bourgeois morality. What Sade actually did was to invert the morality of his age, which is very different to being liberated from it. Sade's attitude towards bourgeois morality is fetishistic which is precisely why he found masturbating over and destroying crucifixes pleasurable. And Sade's liberated attitude towards women only extends as far as sexual licence. He finds the idea that women may not want to submit to his desires criminal. This seems to suggest that Sade has the personality of a child – rather than being liberated he is merely anti-social – he believes in extending his own liberty at any cost, no matter how heavily this impinges of the liberty of others. Sade is not so much interested in liberation as in getting his own way. A Breton or Vaneigem project into such reactionary attitudes passionate activity and a fantastic individuality. In doing so they hope that a little of Sade's criminality will be reflected back from their incredible projections.

LAUTREAMONT (1846–1870)

'Ideas improve. The meaning of words participates in improvement. Plagiarism is necessary. Progress implies it. It squeezes the phrase of an author, makes use of its expressions, rubs out a false idea, replaces it with a true idea.'
Isidore Ducasse (Lautreamont) 'Poems.'

Ideas improve. The meaning of words participates in improvement. Plagiarism is necessary. Progress implies it. It squeezes the phrase of an author, makes use of its expressions, rubs out a false idea, replaces it with a true idea.'
Guy Debord 'Society Of The Spectacle.'

'Ever since men grew up and learned to read Lautreamont everything has been said and yet few have taken advantage of it.'
Raoul Vaneigem 'Revolution Of Everyday Life.'

Little is known about the life of Isidore Ducasse other than that he

SMILE/84b WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET/LONDON E1

was born at 9am on 4th April 1846 in his parents house on Calle Camacua in Montevideo, Uruguay, and that he died, from unknown causes, at 8am on Thursday 24th November in a hotel room at 7 Faubour–Montmartre, Paris.

Ducasse is best known today as Lautreamont, the name under which he self-published the novel 'Maldoror'. He later self-published his 'Poems' under his own name.

Ducasse has been hailed by those one would expect, the Parisian dadas, the lettrists, the situationists, as an innovator. Certainly his work is characteristic of modernism. It is turgid, fragmented, and one can read almost anything into it because it is essentially meaningless. Ducasse came up against the problems of modernism head on. He was faced with the impossibility of realising the modernist demand for continual innovation. He solved the problem by inversion. He advocated plagiarism. The only thing original in Ducasse is the extent to which he lays emphasis on unoriginality. This idea was taken up again and again by those who followed him.

ALFRED JARRY (1873–1907)

'We are free – let's not forget it's our duty to be free. Hey! not so fast or we might arrive on time. Freedom means never arriving on time – never, never! – for our freedom drills. Let's disobey together.....No! not together, one, two, three! the first will disobey on the count of one, the second on the count of two, the third on three. That makes all the difference.'
Alfred Jarry 'Ubu Enchained.'

Jarry who was heavily influenced by Lautreamont came up against the problem which had haunted Ducasse, the impossibility of genuine innovation, and he solved it in exactly the same way – by inversion. Jarry developed the character of Pere Ubu from a satire two of his school friends wrote about their incompetent physics teacher. Ubu became a cartoon character embodying all that was gross, grasping and vile about the bourgeoisie. By becoming the stupidest and most vicious bourgeois Ubu rose above the mediocrity of those around him. By identifying with his own alienation he transformed it into a utopia of false-conciousness. Jarry developed the Ubu persona both in his writing and his life, to the extent that his own personality and that of Ubu became interchangeable. Jarry's much vaunted individualism was created through the simple amplification of his worst personality traits, that is to say those of the average man. As the man who asserted that death was for the mediocre, Jarry proved that he was somewhat more mediocre than most by dying at a youthful 34 years of age.

FUTURISM (1909–1944)

'We will glorify war – the worlds only hygiene – militarism, patriotism, the destructive gestures of freedom bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for women.....The oldest of us is thirty: so we have at least a decade to finish our work. When we are forty, other younger and stronger men will throw us in the waste-basket like useless manuscripts – we want it to happen!'
F. T. Marinetti 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism.' (1909)

'With our enthusiastic adherence to Futurism, we will:
1) Destroy the cult of the past, the obsession with ancients, pedantry and academic formalism.
2) Totally invalidate all kinds of imitation.
3) Elevate all attempts at originality, however daring, however violent.
4) Bear bravely and proudly the smear of 'madness' with which they try to gag all inovators.....
8) Support and glory in our day–to–day world, a world which is going to be continually and splendidly transformed by victorious science.'
Manifesto Of The Futurist Painters.' (1910)

'The Variety Theatre systematically disparages ideal love and its romantic obsession that repeats the nostalgic languors of passion to satiety, with the robot–like monotony of a daily profession. It whimsically mechanizes sentiment, disparages and tramples down the compulsion towards carnal possession, lowers lust to the natural function of coitus, deprives it of every mystery, every crippling anxiety, every unhealthy idealism.....The Variety Theatre destroys the Solemn, the Sacred, the Serious, and the Sublime in Art with a capital A. It cooperates in the Futurist destruction of immortal masterworks, plagiarizing them, parodying them, making them look commonplace by stripping them of their solemn apparatus as if they were mere attractions.'
F. T. Marinetti 'The Futurist Variety Theatre.' (1913)

Futurism was the first movement in the arts to be run on the lines of a publicity campaign. The 'Founding and First Manifesto of Futurism' appeared on the front page of 'Le Figuro' (at the time the most influential newspaper in Europe) not because the editor believed Futurism to be of any aesthetic value but because its author, Marinetti, payed for it to appear there as an advertisment. At the time the futurist movement did not exist but Marinetti soon created it by financing publications and tours by any artist prepared to label themself 'futurist'.

Futurist art, when it finally appeared, was designed to create scandal and thus recieve maximum media coverage. Art works were not created as an end in themselves but rather as a means to gain press coverage. Without doubt this aspect of futurism greatly accelerated the twentieth-century trend towards viewing art as a consumable lifestyle and the artist rather than his work as the ultimate art product.

Futurist art and ideas reflect the conflicts of the society that produced them. On the one hand there is a total belief in individuality, madness, and creativity as forming the basis of our humanity. On the other there is a belief that science can provide a rational explaination for everything, including human behaviour which can therefore be 'reduced' to mechanistic laws.

By a careful selection of material it would be possible to prove anything about futurism. It was a fascist revolutionary movement of visionary reactionaries, who were if nothing else contradictary. It's great tragedy was that as a formal movement it lasted over thirty years after initially propogating itself on the basis that it would be replaced within a decade. What marks futurism as typical of the art of this century is the emphasis it places of (psuedo) individuality. Like neoism in the second half of the century it saw itself as a mass movement of individuality without ever realising that such movements are always totalitarian.

THE LEFT AVANT–GARDE IN RUSSIA (1910–1930)

'Buildings a hundred stories high cover the earth! Graceful bridges are hung between those buildings.....On the bridges the tail ends of trains disappear from sight.'
Vladimir Mayakovsky 'Mystery Bouffe.'

By concentrating on Mayakovsky and ignoring Malevitch, Tatlin and Kandinsky, it is possible to dismiss the Russian avant-garde as a variation on Italian futurism. This suits my purpose perfectly.

VORTICISM (1914–1915)

'We believe in no perfectibility except our own.'

'AUTOMOBILISM (Marinettism) bores us. We don!t want to go about making a hullo-bulloo about motor cars, anymore than about knives and forks, elephants or gas pipes.'
Wydham Lewis 'Long Live The Vortex.'

'Leonardo was the first futurist.'
Wydham Lewis 'Futurism, Magic and Life.'

'There is one Truth, ourselves, and everything is permitted.'
Wydham Lewis 'Our Vortex.'

'Kill John Bull with Art I shouted. And John and Mrs Bull leapt for joy, in cynical convulsion. For they felt safe as houses. So did I.'
Wydham Lewis 'Blasting and Bombasting.'

Vorticism, like futurism, was a programme for all the arts, both visual and literary. It propogated itself through the review 'Blast', and was primarily identified with one man, Wydham Lewis, although among its other members it included the poet Ezra Pound. As the operaters of the English rerun of futurism the vorticists prided themselves on their originality and consequently spent much of their time criticising Marinetti and his futurist movement in the hope that this would divert attention away from the fact that the two movements were identical.

ZURICH DADA (1915–1919)

'Dada remains within the framework of European weaknesses, it's still shit, but from now on we want to shit in different colours so as to adorn the zoo of art with all the flags of all the consulates.'
Tristan Tzara 'Monsieur Antipyrine's Manifesto.'

'By the way: take away venereal disease and coitus would become universally popular as a parlour-game; you could get it in the shops.'
Walter Serner 'Best Paving Is Red Blessing.'

Dada was not an art movement but the ultimate bourgeois philosophy

COMPETITION
£1000 IN PRIZES
EVERY SATURDAY
AT
A SUPERMARKET
NEAR
YOU

because it wore alienation as a badge of pride. In dada bourgeois values were inverted but not overthrown. To be a dadaist was to oppose bourgeois values because they were not bourgeois enough. The dadaists demanded the destruction of all values precisely because they felt this to be the greatest of all possible losses.

BERLIN DADA (1918–1920)

'To be against this manifesto is to be a dadaist.'
Berlin Dada Manifesto.

Berlin dada was based solely upon this paradox and as such should be dismissed as bourgeois Hegelianism.

PARIS DADA (1919–1966)

'Surrealism will introduce you to death, which is a secret society. It will glove your hand, entombing there the consumate M with which the word memory begins.'
Andre Breton 'First Surrealist Manifesto.' (1924)

Paris dada, popularly known as surrealism, was based on a series of false promises.

LETTRISM (1946–57)

'I scarcely know of anything.....that can rival the beauty of the Paris metro maps.'
Guy Debord 'Introduction To A critique Of Urban Geography.'

As statements such as this demonstrate, the lettrists, like the dadaists, didn't escape from aestheticisation, rather they extended it to cover the most banal situations and objects.

The history of the lettrists is very boring, if not particularly complex, I will not deal with it in any depth. At first there was simply a Lettrist Movement, after 1952 it co-existed with the breakaway Lettrist International, led by Guy Debord. The Lettrist Movement continued to exist after the Lettrist International disolved into the Situationist International in 1957. I find the work of the Lettrist Movement extremely tedious and therefore will not deal with it. I take the demise of the Lettrist International to be the demise of lettrism because I am not interested in taking the Lettrist Movement into consideration although it did continue to exist.

Lettrism is characterized by works such as 'Memories', a book produced by Guy Debord whose covers were made of sandpaper so that if the book was put in a bookcase it would rip the covers of the books on either side of it when it was taken out. Debord also produced films such as 'Hurlements en faveur de Sade' (1952) which was feature length but lacked any images, the audience being plunged into darkness from beginning to end, except for a few short bursts of white light accompanied by a 'random' monlogue.

However the Lettrist International is not remembered for its art works, which were rather few and far between, but for its bohemian life-style, which consisted of drinking, drug-taking and failed suicide attempts. Debord, himself, is a self-confessed dope-head, a proto-hippy, who writes quite openly about his drug use.

COBRA (1948–1951)

'To speak of desire for us, men of the twentieth-century, is to speak of the unknown, because all we know of the kingdom of our desires is that it comes down to an immense desire for freedom.'
Constant 'C'est notre desir qui fait la revolution' in Cobra No. 4.

'The work of art does not repeat itself, does not reproduce itself, ever. It is in the nature of art to be unique. Art is the unique act of man or the unique in human actions.....The art of COBRA is distinguished from other art trends of its time by its point of departure, which represents a new perspective on abstract art. One could say that it is an abstract art that does not believe in abstraction.'
Asger Jorn 'Pour la forme, ebauche d'une methodologie des arts.'

COBRA is a name made from the initial letters of three cities, Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam. It refers to a guild of artists formed aftter a conference at the 'Centre International de Documentation sur l'Avant-Garde' in Paris in November 1948. The group. although chiefly remembered for its painting, was made up of writers as well as visual artists and included in its ranks a number of former adherents to Parisian dada (surrealism). COBRA's stress on spontaneity, the unconcious, profound psychic forces, the primative, and the violent reveal not only its origins in Zurich and Paris dada but also a marked obsession with authenticity, an obsession which was very much the product of the bourgeois enviroment the COBRA artists believed they were reacting against.

THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL (1957–1971)

'The limited pleasure derived from destruction could end up bringing down the power that sets such limits to pleasure. We only have to look at Stockholm or Watts to see that negative pleasure is forever on the point of tipping over into total pleasure – a little shove and negative violence releases its positivity. I believe that all pleasure embodies the search for total, unitary satisfaction, in every sphere – a fact that I doubt Huysmans had the humour to see when he solemnly described a man with an errection as insurgent.'
Raoul Vaneigem 'Revolution Of Everyday Life.'

'.....communism is just as bourgeois an affair as is majority socialism, in other words capitalism in a new guise.'
Van Doesburg,Arp, Tzara, Schwitters, Spengemann 'Against Committed Art.' (1924)

'Thought must be weighed and sold like any other commodity.'
Futurist Manifesto 1914 'Weights, Measures, and Prices Of Artistic Genius.'

The Situationist International was formed from an amalgamation of the Lettrist International, the London Psychogeographical Association, and the International Movement For An Imaginist Bauhaus. The membership of the latter had many overlaps with the membership of COBRA and the Nuclear Art Movement.

The Situationists elaborated a theory and practice that were based on a belief in the lies of bourgeois ideology. Capitalist philosophers developed theories of individualism that were intended to justify the exploitation of the many by the few, but which were never intended as a serious description of the human condition. Having taken this ideology seriously the Situationists then went on to develop a more extreme version of it. Like the dadaists before them the Situationists were more bourgeois than the bourgeoisie.

NOUVEAUX REALISME (1960–1963)

'The nouveaux realistes consider the world as a picture, the great fundamental work from which they appropriate fragments endowed with a universal significance. They set before us the real in divers aspects of its expressive totality.'
Pierre Restany 'First Nouveaux Realiste Manifesto.'

'An artist always feels slightly awkward when someone asks him to explain his work.'
Yves Klien in his 'Iolas Gellery Exhibition Catalogue.'

'Chance is my raw material, it is my blank.'
Arman 'Arman: 33 Accumulations Catalogue.'

The Nouveaux Realiste group was formed by the art critic Pierre Restany who was also its chief theoriotician. Two of the members, Klien and Manzoni, had previously been associated with the Nuclear Art Movement. Another member, Daniel Spoerri, went on to make important contributions to Fluxus. Mass production, consumption, and trash culture were the subject matter and raw material of nouveaux realiste art. Christo packaged 'found' objects, Manzoni sold his breath and shit as art products, Klien exhibited an empty gallery, Arman made assemblages out of junk, Tinguely made machines which had no function, while Raymond Hains and Jacques de la Villegle collected 'poeticized' (torn) posters from the walls of Paris and displayed them as art. These activities were excessively bourgeois. The Nouveaux Realistes attempted to transform the entire world into the commodity 'art', thus enabling them to appropriate it as capital and re-sell it to those they had dispossessed through this very appropriation. They aimed at colonizing every last piece of trash with their own personality, that of the artist, in a desperate search for sources of primative accumulation. On the ideological level they 'justified' this appropriation with a theory of the authentic, the real, which in typical bourgeois fashion they coupled with the concept of the original, the new, an idea also implying individuality. To an artist the real is never enough, it must be coupled to the 'becoming' of progress, which is then reduced to the 'being' of the new – hence 'Nouveaux Realisme'.

SMASH THE SPECTACLE

SMILE/84b WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET/LONDON E1

FLUXUS (1962–1978)

'When the telephone rings, it is allowed to continue ringing, until it stops.

When the telephone rings, the reciever is lifted, then replaced.

When the telephone rings, it is answered.'
George Brecht 'Three Telephone Events.'

'Prepare a list of all females presently alive throughout the world. Make use of census bureaus where possible. Only through assiduous effort can this project be realised, as many females are invisible.'
Joan Mathews 'Census.'

'CHARACTER – A BULLET
Road at night, cold deserted.
A minute of silence – A gunshot.
CURTAIN.'
Francesco Cangiullo 'Detonation (Synthesis of all Modern Theatre).' (1915)

'Our futurist theatre will be synthetic. That is very brief. To compress into a few minutes, into a few words and gestures, innumerable situations, sensibilities, ideas, sensations, facts, and symbols.'
Marinetti, Settimelli, Corra 'The Futurist Synthetic Theatre.' (1915)

The fluxevent, identified with artists such as George Brecht, Yoko Ono, and Bob Watts, is identical to the futurist synthetic theatre. The only novelty to be found in Fluxus, as a formal art movement, is that pop musicians such as John Lennon (of the Beatles) and John Cale (of the Velvet Underground) were allowed to participate in the groups activities along with the usual mish mash of odd-balls and upper-class misfits who form the traditional mainstay of modernist art movements.

MAIL ART (1967–1984)

'There are possibilities for the great artist in the picture postcard.'
Wydham Lewis 'The Exploitation Of Vulgarity.' (1915)

The postcard, the xerox, rubber-stamp activity, and junk mail are the forms most often used by mail artists in their work. To anyone but a mail artist, the end products of work in such fields appears to be worthless.

PUNK ROCK (1976–1979)

'I've never made it with a woman
I've only made it with men
I'd like to make it with a woman
Just to see if I can.'
Crisis 'Alienation.'

Punk was not a cry for liberation but a call for self-managed alienation. Alienation was held up as the wearers badge of difference. What punks objected to was not alienation itself but the way in which it was foistered on the individual from outside. Punks wanted to control their alienation not to aleviate it, but to increase it qualatively, and thus increase their 'individuality', their 'seperateness'.

NEOISM (1979–1985)

'From today, you will be President of The Christ Society Ltd, and recruit members. You must convince everyone that he too can be Christ, if he wants to be, on payment of fifty marks to your society. Members of our society will no longer be subject to temporal authority and will automatically be unfit for military service.'
Raoul Hausmann 'Courrier Dada.'

The basis of Neoism lies in the idea that anyone can be a particular individual. David Zack appropriated this idea from Berlin dada, in whose case it was Christ, in Neoism this individual was Monty Cantsin. When Zack came up with the name Monty Cantsin he likened it to the name Santa Claus, revealing where the Berlin dadas probably got the idea but obscuring where he had taken it from. Like Santa Claus, anybody can become Monty Cantsin, but nobody IS Monty Cantsin. Cantsin is a fantasy figure. Neoism disintergrated in 1985 in arguements over exactly who Monty Cantsin was. Istvan Kantor, an important but mentally unbalanced neoist, had been insisting for some time that he was 'the only and true Monty Cantsin', in the same way that other lunatics might insist that they 'really are' Christ, Santa Claus, or Louis XIV. With Kantor having gone completely gaga other neoists left the network in futile attempts to avoid personal communication with him.

PRAXIS (1985–1990)

'I exist therefore I am.'

'PRAXIS was never intended to be a serious art movement, it was a rather slight joke. A humourous way of exposing the stupidity of organised art movements.'
Karen Eliot 'The Left Hand Path.'

When Istvan Kantor set himself up as Pope Andre Breton II (alias Monty Cantsin) PRAXIS was founded to assist him in his aims.

Conclusions: To Have As Goal Practical Truth.

'.....art no longer has meaning because Western society doesn't know where it is going. With 1914, the West lost the meaning and direction of civilisation.....From then on art was to be tragic, narcissistic, or the negation of itself. In former periods of crisis one sought the meaning of the world: today one doubts if it has one.'
Jean Barrot 'Critique Of The Situationist International.'

Where the avant-garde and radical theory went wrong was in believing the lies of bourgeois individualism. Man is a social animal, he needs the collective to survive. We do not need more freedom, more choice, or the free play of radical subjectivity. What is needed is a more elaborate system of tyrany and terror. What's needed is a dictatorship without a dictator. The problem in the past has been that systems of tyrany were established at the cost of allowing an elite to control the system. This elite was, itself, above the despotism it imposed, and as such developed irrationalities from the inhumanity of such a condition, irrationalities which it then propogated throughout society. Humanity will not be happy until every last individual is subject to continuous fear of brutal violation. The essential has been said, the point however is to understand it.

EXPLAINING MODERNISM TO THE QUEEN

LAUTREAMONT: In the history of the avant-garde Lautreamont's name has the same function as the word 'democracy' in mainstream society. It is a word around which partisans can rally. What Lautreamont wrote is no longer important, he is merely the point from which the beginning of the avant-garde tradition can be traced.

FUTURISM: Italian movement in the arts whose main historical interest lies in the fact that its founder, F. T. Marinetti, was a friend of Alfred Jarry.

RUSSIAN FUTURISM: Russian futurism is characterised by the poet Mayakovsky who wrote the tragic play 'Vladimier Mayakovsky', a celebration of his own poetic genius. The dialogue consisted chiefly of the repetition of Mayakovsky's name.

DADA: Dada kidnapped its ideas and artistic techniques from futurism. However the dadaists always maintained their superiority over the futurists by one of their number, Sami Rosenstock, working under the assumed name 'Tristan Tzara'.

LETTRISM: The lettrists are famous for the intervention one of their members made at Easter High Mass at Notre Dame Cathedral in 1951. He donned priests robes, stepped up to the pulpit, and informed the assembled congregation 'God is dead'.

BEAT GENERATION: A group of writers notable for their sexual activities.

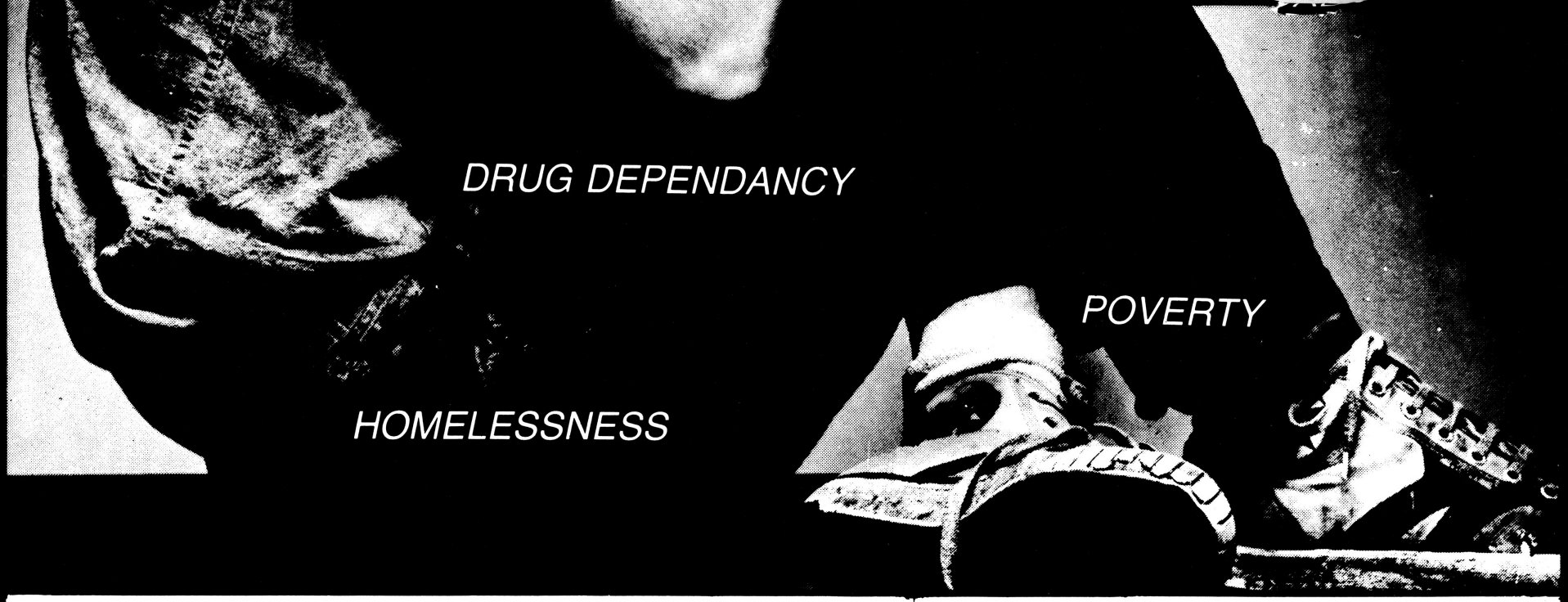
FLUXUS: Fluxus were led by an anally fixated masochist, George Maciunas, who dreamed up a plan to financially cripple museums and galleries by posting individually wrapped bricks to them in large numbers, without stamps, but bearing the name of another museum as the return address.

NEOISM: An International Movement in the arts originating in Montreal in 1979. It is notable for never producing anything of any worth.

PRAXIS: The movement in which theory becomes practice thus invalidating at a single stroke any pretentions individual members of the movement have about belonging to an avant-gardist organisation. All members of PRAXIS work under the name Karen Eliot and produce a magazine entitled Smile.

SERIOUS CULT

YOUR MIND ISN'T THE ONLY THING GOVERNMENTS DAMAGE.



It can also have some pretty nasty effects on your life. All of which you can start suffering long before you become addicted.

You'll probably start looking ill, losing weight and feeling like death. you'll begin to vote not to get high any more, but just to feel normal.

And, as you lose control of your future, you could lose control of your mind too.

Until one day you'll wake up knowing that, instead of you controlling the government, it now controls you.

So, if a politician asks you to vote for him, use your brain while you still can.

And say no.

GOVERNMENTS REALLY SCREW YOU UP.

SMILE/84b WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET/LONDON E1

ART OR PRAXIS?

1) Perhaps the most diseased justification the artist can give of his profession is to say that it is somehow scientific. Istvan Kantor, Cavelini and Andre Stitt are exponents of this sort of justification.

The law which relates the mass of a body to its velocity has predictive value and is an outstanding scientific law. Is the work of art such a law? The experiment which shows that the speed of light is independent of the motion of its source is a measurement of a phenomenon crucial to the confirmation of a scientific hypothesis; it is an outstanding scientific experiment. Is the work of art such a measurement? The invention of the vacuum tube was an outstanding technological advance. Is the work of art such a technological advance? Differential geometry is a deductive analysis of abstract relations and an outstanding mathematical theory. Is the work of art such an analysis?

The motives behind the scientific justification of art are utterly sinister. Perhaps Istvan Kantor is merely rationalizing because he wants an academic job and the renewal of his Canada Council grant. But Cavelini is out to reduce art to a pedantic psuedo-science. And Stitt, with his 'scientific art' intends nothing less than the suppression of the culture of 'lower classes' and 'lower races';

It is the creative personality himself who has the most reason to object to the 'scientific' justification of art. Again and again, the decisive step in artistic development has come when an artist produces a work that shatters all existing 'scientific' laws of art, and yet is more important to the audience than all the works that obey the laws.

2) The artist or entertainer cannot exist without urging his product on other people. In fact, after developing his product, the artist goes out and tries to win public acceptance for it, to advertise and promote it, to sell it, to force it on people. If the public doesn't accept it at first, he is disappointed. He doesn't drop it, but repeatedly urges the product on them.

People have every good reason,then to ask the artist: 'Is your product good for me even if I don't like or enjoy it?' This question really lays art open. One of the distinguishing features of art has always been that it is very difficult to defend art without referring to peoples liking or enjoying it. (Functions of art such as making money or glorifying the social order are real enough, but they are rarely cited in defense of art. Let us put them aside.) When one artist shows his latest product to another, all he can usually ask is 'Do you like it?' Once the scientific justification of art is discredited, the artist usually has to admit: 'If you don't like or enjoy my product, there's no reason why you should 'consume' it.'

There are exceptions. Art sometimes becomes the sole channel for political dissent, the sole arena in which oppressive social relations can be transcended. Even so, subjectivity of value remains a feature which distinguishes art and entertainment from other activities. Thus art is historically a leisure activity.

3) But there is a fundamental contradiction here. Consider the object which one person produces for the liking, the enjoyment of another. The value of the object is supposed to be that you just like it. It supposedly has a value which is entirely subjective and entirely within you. Yet – the object can exist without you, is completely outside you, is not you or your valuing, and has no inherent connection with you or your valuing. The product is not personal to you.

Such is the contradiction of much art and entertainment. It is unfortunate that it has to be stated so abstractly, but the discussion is about something so personal that there can be no interpersonal examples of it. Perhaps it will help to say that in appreciating or consuming art, you are always aware that it is not you, your valuing – yet your liking it, your valuing it is usually the only thing that can justify it.

In art and entertainment, objects are produced having no inherent connection with people's liking, yet the artist expects objects to find their value in people's liking them. To be totally successful, the object would have to give you an experience in which the object is as personal to you as your valuing of it. Yet you remain aware that the object is another's product, seperable from your liking of it. The artist tries to 'be oneself' for other people, to 'express oneself' for them.

4) There are experiences for each person which accomplish what art and entertainment fail to. The purpose of this essay is to make you aware of these experiences, by comparing and contrasting them with art. I have coined the term PRAXIS for these experiences.

Consider all of your doings, what you already do. Exclude the gratifying of physiological needs, physically harmful activity, and competitive activities. Concentrate on spontaneous self-amusement or play. That is, concentrate on everything you do just because you like it, because you just like it as you do it.

Actually, these doings should be referred to as your 'just-likings'. In saying that somebody likes an art exhibit, it is appropriate to distinguish the art exhibit from his liking of it. But in the case of your just-likings, it is not appropriate to distinguish the objects valued from your valuings, and the single term that covers both should be used.

When you write with a pencil, you are rarely 'attentive' to the fact that the pencil was produced by somebody other than yourself. You can use something produced by somebody else without thinking about it. In your just likings, you never notice that things are not produced by you. The essence of a just-liking is that in it, you are not aware that the object you value is less personal to you than your very valuing.

These just-likings are your PRAXIS. Some of your dreams are PRAXIS; and some childrens play is PRAXIS (but formal children's games aren't). In a sense, though, the attempt to give impersonal examples of PRAXIS is futile, because the end result is neutral things or actions, cut off from the valuing which gives them their only significance; and because the end result suggests that PRAXIS is a deliberate activity like carrying out orders. The only examples for you are your just-likings, and you have to guess them by directly applying the abstract definition.

Even though PRAXIS is defined exclusively in terms of what you like, it is not necessarily solitary. The definition simply recognizes that valuing is an act of individuals; that to counterpose the likes of the community to the likes of the individuals who make it up is an ideological decption.

5) It is now possible to say that much art and entertainment are psuedo-PRAXIS; that your PRAXIS is the total originality beyond art; that your PRAXIS is the absolute self-expression and absolute enjoyment beyond art. Can PRAXIS, then, replace art, can it expand to fill the space now occupied by art and entertainment? To ask this question is to ask when utopia will arrive, when the barrier between work and leisure will be broken down, when work will be abolished. Rather than holding out utopian promises, it is better to give whoever can grasp it the realization that the experience beyond art already occurs in his life – but is totally suppressed by the general repressiveness of society.

Note: The avant-garde artist may raise a final question. Can't art or entertainment compensate for its impersonality by having sheer newness as a value? Can't the very foreignness of the impersonal object be entertaining? Doesn't this happen with mock risk games, for example? The answer is that entertainmental newness is also subjective. What is entertainingly strange to one person is incomprehensible, annoying, or irrelevant to another. The only value is that PRAXIS does not have more foreigness than other entertainment does.

As for objective newness, or the objective value of mock risk games, these issues are so difficult that I have been unable to reach final conclusions about them.

NIHILISM, PHILOSOPHY WITHOUT MEANING.

There are many ways in which I could begin but perhaps it is best to start by explaining how I became Karen Eliot. The name Karen Eliot is a multiple name. It is a name anyone can use, and indeed many people do use it. The purpose of having a large number of people use the same name is to examine practically the philosophical question of individuality. It was interest in such philosophical questions and their solution that lead me to take part in the multiple name exercises and adopt the name Karen Eliot.

Of course I am interested in many philosophical questions besides that of individuality, for instance I am interested in notions of truth. To practically examine the question of truth I spread ideas that I do not believe in and carefully watch other peoples reaction to them.

What is important about this approach to philosophical questions, which can be termed PRAXIS, is that it presents people with the means to experiment and reach their own conclusions.

There is a tide of alienation sweeping through our society and its most developed fronts are not to be found amongst the artists and writers who sit at home and analyse it but rather amongst insurrectionary militants. At actions like 'Stop the City' thousands of militants came onto the streets to fight the police, smash up the property of the rich, and, for a day at least, sense their strength.

As values collapse the only value left is the collapse of values. Even the nihilist believes in the value of his nihilism. Humanity craves meaning and the destruction of values is the last value for twentieth-century militants to cling to.

Today all we can hope for in the development of political critiques is something that will divert our attention from the realities of the world for a few moments. Something good enough to receive a few newspaper headlines which we will soon forget until they reappear a week later under a soogy portion of chips purchased during a long treck home in the chill of a lonely night.

Today, while the stars explode and the earth shakes beneath our feet, all we feel is a mild irritation. Destruction has followed destruction and we know from experience that not even the final moment of disillusion can wake us from our sleep.

It is no longer possible to imagine that the future will be any different from the past. Doesn't the preceeding sentence strike you as something anyone might have written?

SMILE/84b WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET/LONDON E1

GUILDFORD

a picasso print hangs
pretty as a picture
at the end of a well furnished room

DULWICH

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

SICK OF PERCEPTION

I was sitting on the toilet
When I suddenly realised
There were only seventeen shopping days until Christmass

SWANSEA

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

UNCOLLECTED

anyone who has written anything has written too much

words can only hint at what must be left unspoken

PONTARDDULAIS

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

BEYOND SEX

STARK POINT

remember
small children
can choke on peanuts

CARDIFF

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

HUNTRESS

the misted memory
of a forgotten daydream
wrapped itself around me in the chill of the night

KENNINGTON

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

STOKE NEWINGTON

subjectivity flowers amongst coffee cups
and wilts when the waitress comes to clear them away

CAMBERWELL

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

REQUIEM FOR THE UNKNOWN PLAGIARIST IN A MINOR

The performer requires a pint of water held in a container that can be drunk from easily. The perform must try to drink the pint of water while simultaneously repeating the phrase: 'My name is Karen Eliot and this is PRAXIS.'

BRIXTON

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

REQUIEM FOR THE UNKNOWN PLAGIARIST IN B MINOR

For two performers who stand facing each other with about three feet of space between them. They must then repeat very insistantly to each other the words: 'My name is Karen Eliot.' Where possible the performers should avoid speaking in unison. The performance continues until it is apparent one of the performers has won the arguement.

ELEPHANT AND CASTLE

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

WATER SYMPHONY

For two performers. Each is given a glass of water. The first performer pours his glass of water over the second performers head and then has 30 seconds to pursuade the second performer not to retaliate.

The first performer asks for a volonteer from the audience explaining that they want to pour a glass of water over them. If a volonteer comes foreward the action is carried out.

The first performer spills as much liquid as possible while pouring water from a glass jug into a glass.

WATERLOO

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

MUSIC FOR HEAD

Get someone you are sexually attracted to or who is sexually attracted to you to shave your head.

Grow your hair.

VICTORIA

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

BUS FARE EVENT

50p

PADDINGTON

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

DYSART

grey sea

black slag

cold wind

grey sky

ALEXANDRA PALACE

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

SMILE/84b WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET/LONDON E1

WALLINGTON 4/4/85

I wandered alone
Through the midmorning silence
Of a walled country garden

REGENTS PARK

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

NEWCASTLE CENTRAL

trains pull in and out of the station
some north
some south

BRIGHTON

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

MERZ

kurt schwitters was a bird swimming against the tidal wave that swamped the representational arts

HOVE

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

KEY

hours pass

the telephone rings

a message

CAMDEN

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

STREET EVENTS

a)

stop

go

b)

cross the road when the light turns green

c)

smile at the next person you meet

SOHO

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

PUBLIC ORDER EVENT

fill a suitcase with bread

COVENT GARDEN

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

TRAVEL EVENT

a conversation

EUSTON

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

CUSTOMS EVENT

opening a closed suitcase

closing the opened suitcase

BATTERSEA

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

FIRST LOVE

i felt something strangely familiar
when we walked hand in hand in the park

TWO

VAUXHALL

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

EARLY MORNING POEM

I often lie in bed and wonder
why I find it so hard to get up

CLAPHAM

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

FESTIVAL OF PLAGIARIZED ART

a series of street events to be announced after they take place

CHIVELSTONE

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

SINGING SURGEON

needles

thread

music

KINGSBRIDGE

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

SMILE/84b WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET/LONDON E1

LIBERATION EVENT

make a bonfire of your possessions

SALCOMBE

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

GOING DUTCH

The road unwinds
Outside everything is green and pleasant
Inside it's hard to think above the tick of the engine

EAST PORTLEMOUTH

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

WHEN I WAS A COWBOY

The mountains stood
Solid as rock
At the end of the buffalo plain

HALLSANDS

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

CRETINISM

READING

red sandals

rain water

real ale

WOODGREEN

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

WHISTLE EVENT

blow a whistle

PECKHAM

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

FIVE MINUTES

5 minutes

LONDON BRIDGE

the sun set between the hills like a broken armchair being dropped from a third story window

SNOWDONIA

swallow

falls

THE IMMACULATE MISCONCEPTION

12 May

James Senior glanced at his watch as he walked out of Kennington tube station. It was seven twenty-two. He was expected for supper at eight. James had not met the people he was going to dine with. He did not even know how many of them there would be. He was going to meet the organisers of the Eighth International Neoist Apartment Festival. James was not sure what Neoism was. An artist friend had written to him telling him to get in touch with the people organising the Neoist Festival in London, which James had subsequently done. He'd written off to the address his friend had given him saying that he wished to participate in the festival and had recieved a letter four days later inviting him to supper on May 12th.

James pulled a London street map from his bag. He was standing on Kennington Park Road. All he had to do was cross the road, walk in the direction of Kennington Park until he came to Ravensdown Street, turn left off Ravensdown onto Stannary Street, and then right into Aulton Place. This took four minutes. Number thirteen was easy to spot because it had a large sign planted in the front garden on which the word 'NEOISM' was crudely painted in block capitals. James was rather disappointed to discover Aulton Place was a shabby row of terraced houses with no more than a paved street seperating them from a towering factory wall. Several houses in the row had been derelict for some time, their windows smashed and their roofs missing. None of the occupied houses looked as though they could have met official housing standards.

James looked at his watch, he was early. He walked back onto Kennington Park Road. It was a busy road with some shabby shops and several pubs scattered amongst the grimey flats and houses. He strolled up towards the Elephant and Castle, past the tube station, and then back towards Aulton Place. He passed an attractive girl, each turned their head and caught the other glancing back. For a moment their eyes met and then they turned away and continued walking in opposite directions. James felt ridiculous. He wished he'd had the courage to say something. He crossed the road and walked into Kennington Park. It didn't take him long to find the public toilet.

James was still a few minutes early when he reached Aulton Place. He stood on the street corner for a couple of minutes, and then marched smartly up to number thirteen and knocked authoritively on the door. There was no bell or knocker, he'd rapped with his knuckles. After thirty seconds pause he knocked again, less sure of himself this time. He could hear someone coming down the stairs. A woman of about thirty opened the door. She was slightly smaller than James, more heavily built with blue eyes and bleached hair.

'I'm James Senior.'

'Hi, come in, I'm Judy Shaw.' the woman drawled in an American accent.

James offered her his hand, she clasped it firmly.

'Come upstairs, Mark hasn't finished cooking yet, we can relax in my room.'

She led James into a room littered with magazines and papers.

'You said in your letter you'd mainly been doing mail art.'

'Yes.'

'What sort of things?'

'Postcrds, collage, xerox, a lot with rubber stamps, junk mail.'

'Done any performance?'

'No, I'd like to.'

James wasn't sure whether he believed himself.

'What we're trying to do with this Apartment Festival' Judy drawled 'is create an open situation in which anyone can participate. We're trying to remove the barriers between artist and audience, to abolish the seperation between the production and consumption of the art experience.'

'I see.' said James although he didn't.

'Ultimately we believe that the only art work really worth producing is your own life.'

'Yes.' said James who was wondering when supper would be ready.

'It's for this reason we've replaced the word artist with the word Neoist. Neoism describes the total human being. Someone who lives a fully intergrated life, who regards cooking and making love as greater aesthetic experiences than painting or sculpture.'

James wondered how much longer Judy would go on.

'Neoism caslls for man to make the world adapt to him, rather than having him adapt to the world. It heralds a new era of history, the death of history itself.....'

James was relieved to hear a knock on the bedroom door.

'Come in.' sighed Judy.

'Supper's ready.' announced a the slightly built man in his middle thirties as he walked through the door.

'Mark, this is James Senior. James, this is Mark West.'

The two men shook hands.

'Hello.' said Mark smiling.

'Hello.' echoed James.

As James allowed his hand to drop he noticed Mark's rise and remove a note book and pencil from a breast pocket. Mark glanced at his watch, made a note in the book, and carefully replaced book and pencil in his pocket.

'Right, shall we go through to the kitchen?' More a command than a question.

Already seated at the table was a small Welsh woman of about twenty-eight, with bleached hair and a fiery look in her eye. She was introduced as Hazel, Mark's girlfriend.

Dinner was a vegetable casserole served with chapattis, a side salad, and large quantities of white wine. Once James had commenced eating, Mark went into the story of how he got up at six-thirty every morning to steal vegetables from the bins at New Covent Garden Market. Judy did not disguise her boredom.

'Do you make a living from art?' James asked Mark.

'I'm a full time artist, I support myself on the social.'

'You're a performance artist?'

'I do some performance, mainly I collect data.'

'What kind of data?'

'All kinds.'

'Is that what the note book's for?'

'Yes, I record as much as I can. The times I get up, go to bed, depart from somewhere and arrive somewhere else, the name of anyone I meet and the time at which I meet them, what and when I eat and drink, the times at which I piss and crap, the times at which I have sex, how long it takes me to orgasm.'

'I see,' said James 'and what do you do with all this data?'

'I put it into data books.'

'And what do you do with these data books?'

'I sell them when I can to collectors and museums.'

When supper and a second bottle of wine were finished Hazel pulled a bottle of vodka from a bag at her side.

'I thought we might need this.' she said smiling.

By the time the vodka was finished and Mark and Hazel had disappeared downstairs James was extremely drunk.

'What are we going to do with you?' enquired Judy. 'You don't look like you'll make it home. There's a mattress in the room beneath mine, or you can sleep with me.'

'I'll sleep with you.'

13th May

When James awoke he felt sick. Judy was lying in bed beside him. He didn't know what was expected of him so he just lay where he was. Judy woke up . James pretended to be asleep. Judy got out of bed. James turned over and groaned.

'I'm going to see some people.' Judy announced as she was dressing. 'I'll be a while. Stay if you like. If you don't, then come back soon. We'll work out a performance to do together.'

James groaned in assent. Judy kissed the back of his neck.

'You're such a baby.'

James smiled into the pillow. He wasn't sure how long it was before he got up. Judy was gone. The house was empty. He drank a glass of water and left.

15th May

James looked out of his window but didn't take in what he saw. He decided to go back to bed. He'd spent the best part of two days in bed. When he awoke it was dark. He dressed without putting the light on, left his room and walked down through Whitechapel to Tower Bridge and the Thames.

16th May

James wasn't quite sure how he'd arrived in Kennington but it was light now. At a little after six he found himself sitting in the garden of 13 Aulton Place. Thirty minutes later Mark emerged from the house.

'Hello.' said Mark, carefully hiding his suprise.

'Hello.' echoed James.

'Coming to steal vegetables?'

'Yes.' answered James.

Mark made an entry in his note book and the two men marched off in silence. It didn't take long to get to the market. James watched as Mark pulled disgarded vegetables from bins, examined them, and if they were edible put them in his plastic bag. When he'd filled the bag Mark pulled another from his pocket. There were quite a number of people collecting vegetables. Picking up what had been thrown away by the traders. They seemed to be a permanant feature of the market. The scurity men ignored them.

Back at Aulton Place Mark sat James down in the kitchen and put a cup of tea infront of him. James watched Mark put away vegetables. When he'd finished this task Mark left the room. He came back with a bundle of papers.

'You were too drunk to take these the other night, they'll interest you, they're about Neoism.'

'Thanks.'

'I'm going out now. You'll have a while to wait before Judy gets up but you've got something to read, you'll be alright.'

Judy got up around noon, she popped her head into the kitchen on her way down to the bathroom.

'Hi, I'm glad you've come. I'll wash, dress and be with you.'

She returned forty minutes later.

'Hi.' she said smiling.

'Hi.' echoed James.

'How are you?'

'Fine.'

'Good, would you like something to eat.'

'Yes.' replied James.

Judy cooked bacon and eggs, she liked English breakfasts but gave most of it to James.

'I'm going to sit in the park. Are you coming?'

'Yes.' replied James, not convinced that he wanted to.

18th May

James woke up early and decided he wanted to see Judy. He walked, if he'd taken the tube he'd have arrived far too early. He knocked on the door. No reponce. He knocked again. No responce. He knocked even louder. No one was home. James went and sat in Kennington Park. He went back to number thirteen. Mark answered the door.

'Hello, come in, Judy's out with a couple of friends who arrived from New York last night.'

Mark sat James down in the kitchen and put a cup of tea infront of him. By the time Judy got back it was dark. With her were the conceptual artist Person Person and his blind lover Cordellia Smith. Person had adopted his rather curious name because he felt traditional names reeked of a romantic individualism that any serious artist should abandon. He always introduced Cordellia as his blind lover although it was more accurate to describe her as partially sighted. Person and Cordellia were tired and after tea and chapattis went to bed.

'I've had an idea about a performance we could do.' announced Judy.

'Yes.' replied James.

'We stand facing each other chanting our names while taking our clothes off. Then we swop clothes and chant each others names while we put on each others clothes.'

'I'd prefer something a little more static.' replied James who was horrified by the idea.

'Oh, come on, don't tell me your shy.'

'I don't know, I'll think about it.'

19th May

James was woken at six-thirty by the sound of voices. He got up. Judy turned over and went back to sleep. The noise was caused by the arrival of Peter Murray who'd come down from Edinburgh on the overnight train.

By seven, James, Mark, Peter and Hazel were sitting round the kitchen table eating a communal breakfast of museli, toast, and black coffee. Mark and Peter were old, old, friends and left James and Hazel feeling like intruders. Hazel decided to go home. James said he'd walk her to the bus stop.

Hazel guided James down to the Oval from where she'd catch her bus to East Dulwich.

'You seeing Judy?'

'Yeah.'

'Don't you think she's a little old for you?'

'I don't know.'

Judy got up reasonably early by her standards. Around eleven-thirty. Once she'd washed she made a breakfast of boilded eggs for James and herself.

'Have you thought about whether you'll do the performance?'

'Yes.'

'And?'

'I'll do it.'

Judy beamed. James smiled, he hadn't decided whethered he'd really go through with it. Judy leaned across the table and kissed him.

When they'd finished eating Judy suggested they go and sit in Kennington Park.

SMILE/84b WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET/LONDON E1

21st May

When James arrived at Aulton Place he found Jurgen Braun constructing a 'Neoist Altar' in the street outside number thirteen. James had heard a great deal about Jurgen from Judy and immediately recognized him by his attire, a red coat, gold shoes and a brown and gold rain hat.

The front door was open and James walked into the hall to find Mark 'hanging' various pieces of mail art on the walls. Mark had spent the best part of the day constructing a 'data installation' in his room and was now making the final touches to the house before the opening 'ceremony' of the Neoist Festival later in the evening. One of these touches was that everything in the house had a name card attatched to it. The walls had cards saying 'wall' tacked to them, tables had cards saying 'table' tacked to them, doors had cards saying 'door' tacked to them, and so on, so that virtually every object in the house had a small neatly written card tacked to it stating exactly what it was.

Upstairs James ran into Gloria Swann, a professional model and part time performance artist from the States. Judy had slipped out of her usual jeans and t-shirt and was clad in a black cat-suit. She was carefully applying one of several successive layers of make-up to her face.

Terry Wood, a twenty-year old mail artist was hanging model aircraft from the kitchen ceiling. Time dragged slowly by bringing the 'Flaming Chapatti Opening' ever nearer. Marianne Greenwood, Braun's girlfriend. emerged from a room downstairs. She refused to speak so much as a word to anyone but Jurgen, but was happy to eat any food that came her way, accepting it silently.

Brett Johnson appeared with his lover, Adrian Foster, and a young boy named Charles White who he'd picked up somewhere, in tow. Hazel arrived with a friend of hers called John. Person Person, Cordellia Smith and Peter Murray all emerged from somewhere. James was unsure whether they had done so together or seperately. Karl Pratt, a performance artist from Northern Ireland, failed miserably in his attempt to make a dramatic enterance into the kitchen. A fellow Irishman, Kevin Alderman and the poet Stephen Brady followed him in.

Mark and Jurgen ushered everyone from the kitchen and into the street, announcing that Jurgen was going to do a performance. In the street Jurgen primed a loaf of bread with rubber cement, set light to it and placed it on his head. The result was spectacular but safe, the rubber cement burnt while the bread acted as insulation between the flames and Jurgen's head. While his bread hat burnt Jurgen chanted a list of names and did a little dance.

Two police officers arrived. There'd been a report of a black magic ritual taking place in the street. When Mark explained that it was an art event they smiled indulgently and left.

Once those who were going home had gone, James snuggled up to Judy in the safety of her bed and Hazel stumbled drunkenly into Mark's room where she fell into his data installation, demolishing it. Mark spent most of the night dismantling the remains and putting them in order while Hazel lay curled up in his bed and Peter Murray tried to catch some sleep on his floor. In the room above Mark's, John was in bed with Gloria Swann, Person Person with Cordellia Smith and Brett Johnson with Adrian Foster.

22nd May

James got up at nine-thirty. Judy ten minutes later. People were stiring in the room below. Mark, Hazel and Peter had already left the house and were eating breakfast in a cafe on Kennington Road.

People wondered in and out of the kitchen. At 11.15am, James, Judy, Mark, Peter, Person, Gloria, Jurgen and Marianne left the house and caught a 159 bus from Kennington Park to Trafalgar Square, and then walked the minimal distance to Canada House where the Neoist Video Screening was scheduled to start at noon. Stephen Brady arrived just before twelve and a couple of others just after. The videos were tedious. A few members of the general public wandered innocently in and very quickly wandered out again. The screenings dragged on until 5.30pm, a marathon endurance test. James decided to give the evenings activities, 'live action and exchanges', a miss and headed off for home.

23rd May

The Neoists were scheduled to meet at noon on Lambeth Bridge to shoot an episode in Jurgen's film 'In Search Of The Great Mr Pighead'. In the scene to be shot today a group of English artists would try to prevent Jurgen crossing Lambeth Bridge for no apparent reason. Jurgen, Mark, Judy, Peter, Marianne, Person, Cordellia and Gloria arrived twenty minutes late to find James and Charles White waiting for them. Brett Johnson, Stephen Brady, and Rupert Swiftwood, a rich friend of Mark's, arrived even later.

Jurgen put on his fish hat, a large gutted fish slit down the belly. Thus attired he was ready for rehearsals. It was 2pm before filming was finished.

James and Judy arrived at the London Musicians Collective around six-thirty and found that Mark and Peter had already set up most of the necessary equipment for the 'first act' of 'The Popular Chapatti Circus'. Seeing that everything was in hand, and not wishing to do anything themselves, James and Judy retired to the pub across the road, where, as the evening wore off, they were joined by Terry Wood and Fiona Roberts, a friend of Terry's from his home town of Lymm, Jurgen, Marianne, Stephen Brady, Person, Cordellia, Cloria and Rupert Swiftwood.

Just after eight Mark came into the pub and dragged everyone into the Musicians Collective. The event had been advertised as being open to the public but no paying customers arrived. An evening of 'performances, music, slides, video, installations, readings, films, and free hair cuts' was apparently not to public taste.

24th May

James and Judy got up at eleven-thirty. Mark and Jurgen were setting up video equipment in preparation for the 'Chapatti Armchair Revolution' which was scheduled to run from noon until six. The event was to take place around a table placed in the street so that anyone who happened to be passing could participate.

Gloria Swann, who had left number thirteen very early that morning, arrived home with Stephen Brady and Alan Philips, a young film-maker, in tow. It was one-forty before the Armchair Revolution actually commenced. Alan Philips left after about an hour. A break in filming was taken which coincided with the arrival of Thomas, the junkie from number eleven, who upset everybody by shooting up in front of them.

The afternoon wore on, with only endless cups of tea to help it wear off. Thomas was gazing up at the sun and mumbling something about UFO's.

Conversations sputtered along and were filmed. Mark shaved Person's head, leaving only a few tufts of hair on the side and two pieces on the back in the shape of an inverted question mark. He then proceeded to draw a brain on Person's scalp.

An elderly woman walked down the street, stopped, pointed at Person, exclaimed:

'Gawd, what's the matter with 'im.' and then proceeded on her way.

The woman's interjection proved to be the only eventful moment of the afternoon. The Armchair Revolution ended early and Mark, with a little help from Peter, packed up the video equipment and loaded it into the van they had parked on Milverton Street. Gloria and Stephen left to attend the private view of a show by Jennifer Binnie.

At six-forty-five there was a mass exit from number thirteen. Hazel joined the crew as they walked from the Place to Milverton Street. She'd only just caught her lift to the Musicians Collective.

The evening was not particularly eventful. Again there were no paying customers. To James's suprise he didn't find his performance with Judy in the least part embarassing.

25th May

At eleven-thirty the introduction to the Neoist Guide Dog was filmed. Person was dressed in a dog mask and crawling about on all fours. Cordellia was wearing a pair of dark glasses and carrying a white stick so that she could 'play' the part of a blind woman. The blind woman went from Aulton Place to the Elephant and Castle with her 'dog' guiding her, and from where she caught a bus to Greenwhich Park, where the Neoist Time Picnic would have taken place that afternoon had it not rained.

In the evening Judy made a 'sound sculpture'. She gathered everyone in the kitchen at Aulton Place, handed round crisps and recorded everyone eating them. At ten Jurgen ushered everyone into the back garden, where, under the light of the stars, he performed a 'burial ceremony' for the fish he'd worn as a hat on Lambeth Bridge.

26th May

The Neoist Armada from Lambeth Pier commenced half-an-hour later than scheduled. It was a rainy Saturday afternoon. Everyone had made toy boats to launch on the Thames. Mark got Person to film him launching his, and then filmed everybody else as they launched their creations.

In the evening the 'Chapatti Extinguishing Ceremony' consisted of Mark taking a portrait photograph of everybody and then recording taped interviews with each festival participant thus creating a 'solid audio document' to leave to posterity.

ALTERNATE EDGE

SMILE/84b WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET/LONDON E1

27th May

James and Judy arose at noon. They'd been woken by the sound of Mark and Hazel rowing in the kitchen. They didn't leave their room until they heard Hazel storm out of the house. When they finally walked into the kitchen Mark immediately left the room. James ate the breakfast Judy cooked him and then told her he was going home.

James walked to the telephone box on Kennington Road, riffled through his pockets, he had Hazel's number somewhere. She'd had enough time to get home.

'Hello.'

'Hello, Hazel, it's James, are you alright?'

'Yeah.'

'Listen, maybe I could come over and see you.'

'Yes, that would be nice.'

'We could go for a walk and maybe get a drink later on.'

'I'll see you later.'

'O.K.'

'Bye for now then.'

'Bye.'

When James got to East Dulwich Hazel seemed pleased to see him.

'So what happened between you and Mark?'

'Everything went wrong from the minute I went round there this morning. I made a remark about Jurgen that led to an arguement about modern art. We got in a row and I told him what he did was a waste of time.'

James and Hazel walked down to Dulwich Park where they sat for a while. They left the park just after six and stopped in a pub on their way home. Hazel bought two bottles of Pils and they sat in the beer garden to drink them. When they'd finished James went and got more. When it got dark they moved into the pub. James put his arm around Hazel.

'I really fancy you.' he whispered and then kissed her. 'You're the best looking girl in the world.'

Hazel slipped his arm off her shoulder.

'Don't it's wrong. I'm too old for you. You should be seeing girls like those over there.' she pointed at two girls in their late teens, 'not old women like Judy and me.'

'You're not old, you're beautiful.' whispered James.

He slipped his arm around her and kissed her again. She made no attempt to stop him. James walked Hazel home with his arm wrapped around her. He was not quite as drunk as he was pretending to be. Hazel got some wine from the kitchen.

'What are we going to do with you? We can't put you in Dave's room, he'll be back later on.'

James put his arms around Hazel.

'I'll sleep with you.'

'We're going to regret this.' she whispered.

CRITIQUE OF INTERNATIONAL NEOISM

The origins of Neoism lie as far back in the history of art as anyone can be bothered to trace them. In this case futurism seems as good a place to start as any. Indeed the very word Neoism strikes one as a cheapening through realisation of the futurist project. What was projected as the future is merely new upon its realisation. Indeed both futurism and Neoism were so obsessed with the idea of progress that they failed to realise that what they heralded was already praxis.

The parallels between Neoism and futurism are striking but it was dada, surrealism and fluxus that provided the historical models upon which the Neoists based their movement.

The decisive event in the formation of the Neoist Movement occurred in 1976 when Dave Zack, a not particularly successful art critic, met Istvan Kantor in Budapest. Kantor was a moderately accomplished musician with pretentions about being an 'artist'. Zack saw Kantor as having the potential to become Monty Cantsin, a character he created whose role could, in theory, be fulfilled by anyone. Kantor was not to be the sole Monty Cantsin but one of a number. Zack pursuaded Kantor to defect to the West. Kantor left Hungary several months later on a student visa to study in Paris.

On Zack's advice Kantor then emigrated to Canada, arriving in Montreal in September 77. In 78 Kantor went to Portland, Oregon, where Zack and the mail artist Al Ackerman fed him with ideas to use in his role as Monty Cantsin. Kantor returned to Montreal right at the beginning of 79 and immediately began making an artistic reputation for himself using the name Monty Cantsin.

The first thing Kantor did on his return was gather a group of Montreal youth around him and fashion a collective identity for them as the Neoists. Kantor ingratiated himself with the organisers of the 'Brain In The Mail' show to be held at Vehicule Art in Montreal and eventually managed to gain a lot of undeserved credit for the exhibitions success. The birth of Neoism is usually dated from 14th February 79, the day on which Kantor did a 'postal art performance' to mark the opening of the show.

Subsequent Neoist activity centred around a graffiti campaign, street actions, public interventions and a number of individual works all of which were executed with the intension of recieving scandalised press coverage. These actions are typified by the 'Blood Campaign', a series of events in which Kantor had his blood taken by a nurse and then used it in a performance. The most important of these events were 'Red Supper' held at Vehicule Art, Montreal, on June 30th 79, and the 'Hallowmass and Supper' held at the Motivation 5 Gallery on October 31st 79. There were a number of other 'suppers' in which the food motif played an important part. The use of this motif was lifted directly from fluxus, most obviously in the form of the Fluxfeasts.

Other important elements in Neoist activity during this period were the use of music, predominantly new wave, and the use of technology in the form of video. In October 1980 there was a five day 'occupation' of Motivation 5 during which a two way video communication link was established between the two floors of the gallery. Kantor wrote of the event: 'video conversations eventually developed into an automatic exchange of conceptual ideas, video became reality and reality became video, simultaneously.'

Emphasis should be placed on the words 'automatic exchange'. Communication has become totalitarian. What one thinks and accepts has become automatic, there is no time for reflection or differences of opinion. For there to be an 'automatic exchange of conceptual ideas' there must be a single ideology to bind them together, an ideology from which it is impossible to deviate. The Neoists assume this is 'good' because it is 'new'. Critical reflection has been replaced by the cult of the new for its own sake.

When Kantor tells us that the first time he got a video camera he used it to watch himself masturbating and making love he seems completely unaware of the gap opened up between spectacle and life. He seems unaware that he is passively watching an image of himself rather than experiencing the event directly. When he sent out post cards bearing the message 'I want to die in the tv' he failed to realise that he was already dead.

When Kantor wails 'I refuse to leave technology in the hands of those who control it for their own profit' he fails to consider that the problems of modern society may not be overcome simply by changing the personnel who control technology. In his celebrations of technology he fails to consider that it may be necessary to change the uses to which we put it in order to overcome some of the complex problems facing us today. Similarly in his use of the word 'revolution' Kantor fails to realise that it no longer means political change and becomes instead a metaphor for the failings of his own lucidity.

Neoism spread rapidly throughout North America and Europe precisely because its failings match those of the average artist, that is the inability to grasp their own intellectual impotency. And if Neoist actions and ideas often seem remarkably similar to those of industrial music and culture then that is hardly suprising. After all, Genesis P-Orridge, like Kantor, had his head filled with ideas by Al Ackerman and stole working methods unashamedly from fluxus.

All mail should be addressed to:

Karen Eliot
Box Smile
84b Whitechapel High Street
London E1
England

SOPHISTICATED
WANT FRIED
STORE AND A
LITTLE BIT MORE

ABOLISH TRUTH

RESEARCH INDICATES Four in Five of the
Under—50's will suffer more than a year's unemployment during their working lives.
COVER YOURSELF WITH MAKNO'S INSURGENCY PLAN